

**Department of Human Resources  
Social Services Administration  
311 West Saratoga Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201**

**DATE:** December 17, 2003

**CIRCULAR LETTER:** SSA# 04-04

**TO:** Directors, Local Departments of Social Services, Assistant Directors for Services, Family Service Administrators, Supervisors, and Caseworkers

**FROM:** Dr. Rosemarie DiMauro Satyshur, Executive Director  
Social Services Administration

**RE:** In-Home Services Progress Review (formerly Case Evaluation), Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan, and Family Service Intended Action Letter

**PROGRAMS  
AFFECTED:** Child Protective Services, In-Home Family Services

**ORIGINATING OFFICE:** Children and Family Services

**BACKGROUND:** The goal of all child welfare services is to ensure safety and permanency for children, and improve child well-being. The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), and Maryland's HB 1093, Children in Out-of -Home Placements (1998), require development of policies to strengthen families to prevent child abuse and neglect, provide support for on-going services to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from families, and promote the reunification of families if removal has taken place.

The purpose of the In-Home Services Progress Review, the Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan and Family Service Intended Action Letter are to develop an individualized, strength-based, needs-driven service plan that meets the safety and permanency requirements of ASFA and addresses the unique needs of children and their families as identified through safety and risk assessments. These tools will facilitate meeting Council on Accreditation (COA) requirements for case management.

Social Services Administration (SSA), local departments of social services staff, key stakeholders, and national consultants participated in the development of the In-Home Services Progress Review, the Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan and Family Service Intended Action Letter tool and guides. These tools were designed to help the worker in assessing service needs and to facilitate the service delivery process for child welfare workers.

**ACTION REQUIRED OF:** All In-Home Services workers.

**REQUIRED ACTION:** Provide ongoing services after safety and risk factors are identified using the Safety Assessment (SAFE-C), Safety Plan (if required), North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS), and Maryland Family Risk Assessment (MFRA). Provide documentation of services provided to promote documentation needed by the court system, administrative reviewers and other authorized individuals or programs.

The In-Home Services Progress Review (DHR/SSA 1062) replaces the Case Evaluation/Reconsideration (DHR/SSA 1066).

The Initial Service Agreement (DHR/SSA 1021) replaces the Service Agreement (DHR/SSA 1064) and the Services Application (DHR/SSA 248A).

The Family Service Plan (DHR/SSA 1064) replaces Service Plan (DHR/SSA 1064, 1064A, 1064B).

The Family Service Intended Action Letter (DHR/SSA 1068) replaces the Final Risk Assessment and Case Closure (DHR/SSA 1068) and the Intended Action letter (DHR/SSA 9.1).

**ACTION DUE DATE:** December 2003.

**CONTACT PERSONS:** Steve Berry, Manager  
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**I. PURPOSE:** This circular letter sets forth criteria on how to use the In-Home Services Progress Review (attachment A), Initial Service Agreement (attachment B), Family Service Plan (attachment C), the Family Service Intended Action Letter (attachment D) and Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) list pertaining to closing services (attachment E).

The purpose of these tools is to support and provide a link between the SAFE-C (DHR/SSA 1575), Safety Plan (DHR/SSA 1576), the Child Protective Services Investigation Report (DHR/SSA 181) if applicable, Maryland Family Risk Assessment (MFRA) (DHR/SSA 1061), North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) (DHR/SSA 1515) if applicable, and service delivery. These tools also support standardization of the delivery of services to ensure consistency of service delivery and decision-making throughout the state.

## **II. SERVICE DELIVERY PROCESS:**

Service delivery is crucial to ensure the safety of the child (ren), reduce risk of future harm to the child (ren), improve family functioning in order to promote safety, the child (ren)'s well-being, and to assure permanency. The following tools are used to support a worker's efforts to:

- Document in detail the services needed and/or provided to family members.
- Identify service interventions used to help the family maintain safety and reduce risk in the home.
- Assess family strengths (internal and external).
- Establish service goals and objectives with the family.

These tools help staff consider factors such as special needs, or racial, ethnic, and cultural background specific to the client(s) to determine if any special service approaches are necessary.

### **A. In-Home Services Progress Review**

The In-Home Services Progress Review (DHR/SSA 1062) is used to document:

- Case Status of the agency's involvement with the family.
  - Indicates reason progress review completed.
  - Identify current type of program involvement and time period.
- Family Summary
  - Basic demographic information about the immediate family being served.
  - Summary of reasons for current service that are identified from the completion of the SAFE-C (DHR/SSA 1575), Safety Plan (DHR/SSA 1576) if applicable, Maryland Family Risk Assessments

(DHR/SSA 1061) and North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) (DHR/SSA 1515).

- Information regarding other members in the household, alternative living arrangements for the family and other pertinent information regarding the family.
- Family strengths and weakness that support increasing safety and reducing risk.
- New reports from screening/intake.
- Family's involvement with sanction from the Family Investment Administration (FIA), the completion of a Preliminary Alcohol and Other Drug Sort (PADS) form and court involvement.
- Collaborative Service Planning/Evaluation
  - Identification of target areas for intervention as perceived by the family and the agency, allowing for a discussion on convergence of safety, risk, permanency, and well-being issues.
  - Discussion of the development of the service plan with the family.
  - Evaluation of service effectiveness.
- Service Status Decision
  - Discussion on whether the family needs further services
- Authorization
  - Supervisor's and Administrator's signature documents the completion and authorization of service activities.

This tool must be used for all program (case) transfers, reconsiderations, status of court activity, requests for extensions, and closings (excluding CPS Out –of- Home Maltreatment Investigations when the SAFE-C decision was "Safe" and certain CPS Investigations when there are no service needs for the family because there are no safety, risk, or child well-being issues).

The supervisor should use this tool to evaluate a worker's involvement with the family, to determine if the appropriate services have been provided and if services are still needed.

In all on-going service cases, the service worker should have a corresponding Family Service Plan (DHR/SSA 1064), a Service Provision Log (DHR/SSA 444) and where applicable, North Carolina Family Assessment Survey (NCFAS) (DHR/SSA 1515), Family Service Intended Action Letter (DHR/SSA 1068).

An In-Home Services Progress Review should be completed at the following times:

- To be completed at the conclusion of the CPS investigation, Services to Families with Children (SFC) intake, and Referrals Of Another Agency (ROA) when services are needed for the family because there are safety, risk, or child well-being issues.
- Case Review: within 45 days after transferred into In-Home Family Services, the newly assigned worker must review the tool and make necessary changes or create a new tool if not initiated at intake.
- Reconsideration (Recon): the ongoing service worker should review the previous In-Home Services Progress Review no less than once during every 3 months of service in conjunction with the SAFE-C (DHR/SSA 1575), Safety Plan (DHR/ SSA 1576), MFRA (DHR/SSA 1061), NCFAS (DHR/SSA 1515) if applicable and Family Service Plan (DHR/SSA 1064) and make necessary changes.
- Request to Terminate Services: closing/discontinuing service to the family.
- Changes in Family Circumstances: when it has been determined that the family needs further services due to a removal, reunification, or when another safety or risk factor has been introduced that changes the course of service or court ordered services.
- Voluntary Placement: An agency assessment is necessary to determine if the case situation is appropriate for the child to enter foster care voluntarily with a binding written agreement signed by all involved parties. This applies to two sets of Voluntary placements (1) Time- limited (e.g. Parents/Legal Guardian are in need of short-term support for at least 180 days) or (2) Children with Disabilities (e.g. Parents/Legal Guardian requiring services due to a child's mental health or medical concerns).

## **B. Initial Service Agreement**

The Initial Service Agreement (DHR/SSA 1021) is used to initiate a service contract between the worker/associate and family, i.e. parents, stepparents, relatives, live in boyfriend/girlfriend of a parent, or any person that assumes responsibility for the daily supervision of a child. The Initial Service Agreement identifies why the family came to the attention of the agency, ongoing tasks for the family members and for the worker/ associate team. It acknowledges the willingness of the family to accept services from the In-Home Family Services Program. The Initial Service Agreement should be completed even if the person that assumes responsibility for the daily supervision of a child refuses to sign. The worker should indicate the refusal on the Initial Service Agreement, the In-Home Services Progress Review, and the Contact Sheet. The Initial Service Agreement is used when an

assessment is made that on-going services are needed. Preferably, the identification of the worker that will be providing the services will be known when the tool is completed.

### **C. The Family Service Plan**

The Family Service Plan (DHR/SSA 1064) is used to assist the worker and the family member(s), i.e. child (ren), parents, stepparents, relatives, live in boyfriend/girlfriend of a parent, or any person(s) that assumes responsibility for the daily supervision of a child, in developing a family centered service plan. This plan is meant to insure the safety of the child (ren), reduce the risk of future harm to the child (ren), improve family functioning in order to promote safety, permanence, child well-being, and to prevent the child (ren) from entering out-of-home placement. This tool is used in conjunction with the Initial Service Agreement (DHR/SSA 1021), the SAFE-C (DHR/SSA 1575), the Safety Plan (DHR/SSA 1576), the Maryland Family Risk Assessment (DHR/SSA 1061), and In-Home Services Progress Review (DHR/SSA 1062).

Actions in a service plan should include obtainable objectives, service to support goal, measurement of success, and evaluation date. The plan can be developed and tasks initiated at initial face-to-face contact with the family if safety, risk or child well-being issues are identified, but the plan must be developed no later than the time frames identified in Child Protective Services (07.02.07) and In-Home Family Services (07.02.01) regulations. The service plan must be re-evaluated periodically but no less frequently than every 3 months, and a new service plan signed at least every 6 months after the initial plan is signed. Objectives are established related to a convergence of safety, risk, permanency, well-being issues, any other assessment sources, and/or court order.

Review of objectives is key for service delivery. It lets the caregiver and/or family member know there will be follow-up to the service plan. It also helps the child welfare staff and caregiver and/or family member keep track of progress, and to identify barriers that may hinder service delivery. The worker should discuss the family member's participation in the planning and development of the service plan on the In-Home Services Progress Review tool (DHR/SSA 1062). The worker should also discuss the family's progress to meet objectives of the service plan and the delivery of services.

### **D. The Family Service Intended Action Letter**

The Family Service Intended Action Letter (DHR/SSA 1068) is used to reflect activity at the conclusion of services and provide information on how the family can obtain additional services in the future. It is not necessary for all goals to be met, or for the risk rating to be reduced below a specific level for services to be terminated. The decision to terminate services should be based on the worker's assessment of safety, risk, permanence, and well-being factors, as well as court status.

If the decision is to deny, reduce, suspend, or terminate services the Family Service Intended Action letter should briefly describe the reasons for concluding service. The letter should be completed 10 days prior to the intended action.

State appeal procedures require that notification include the decision, the basis for the decision, the specific Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) citation and support for the decision. The specific regulations can be found on attachment E.

### **III. SUPERVISORY APPROVAL**

The supervisor should review the In-Home Services Progress Review and the Family Service Plan to ensure:

- Timely completion at program designated timeframes; and
- The worker's assessment reflects an accurate judgment of the situation.

The supervisor should review the Family Service Intended Action letter to ensure:

- Timely completion at 10 days prior to denying, reducing, suspending or terminating services;
- The correct COMAR citation has been used, and
- The worker's assessment reflects an accurate judgment of the situation.

Supervisors are required to:

- Discuss safety, risk, permanence, well-being factors, identified service needs for the family and how the services are being offered, as well as court status with each caseworker,
- Sign their approval on the In-Home Services Progress Review, and
- Assist the worker in developing an appropriate Family Service Plan, Family Service Intended Action Letter, and/or In-Home Services Progress Review, if approval cannot be given.

The supervisor is not required to sign the Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan, or Family Service Intended Action Letter. Information on these tools are incorporated on the In-Home Services Progress Review. The signature of the supervisor on the In-Home Services Progress Review signifies approval of service being delivered. Supervisors must approve the contents of the In-Home Services Progress Review and the decision-making related to safety, risk, family well-being, need for services, and the type of services to be provided. Their signature designates approval and completes the process.

The In-Home Services Progress Review, original Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan, and Family Service Intended Action Letter are filed in the case record. Copies of the Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan, and Family Service Intended Action Letter should be left with the appropriate family members.

#### **IV. RELATED ACTIVITY:**

The North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) (DHR/SSA 1515) will continue to be used by In-Home Family Services workers. NCFAS is designed to measure changes in family functioning following a short-term intervention (one to six months). This tool allows the worker to assess family functioning at intake and again at case closing. The difference between the closing and intake rating can be computed and analyzed. NCFAS has been revised to address the change from scores to ratings.

The In-Home Services Progress Review, the Initial Service Agreement, Family Service Plan, and Family Service Intended Action Letter will be included as an automated document in the development of MD CHESSIE. The In-Home Services Progress Review and Family Service Intended Action Letter will be available on DHR's intranet site for local use only. The web address is [www.dhrnet.dhr/](http://www.dhrnet.dhr/) and can be assessed by clicking on SSANet and In-Home Family Services forms and clicking on the desired form for use.

11/24/03



ATTACHMENTS TO THIS DOCUMENT CAN BE FOUND ON THE SSANET (INTRANET SITE) UNDER IN-HOME SERVICES FORMS

ATTACHMENT A

IN HOME SERVICES PROGRESS REVIEW (DHR/SSA 1062) a word processing document

ATTACHMENT B

INITIAL SERVICE AGREEMENT (DHR/SSA 1021)

ATTACHMENT C

FAMILY SERVICE PLAN (DHR/SSA 1064)

ATTACHMENT D

FAMILY SERVICE INTENDED ACTION LETTER (DHR/SSA 1068) a word processing document

ATTACHMENT E

COMAR list pertaining to closing services (DHR/SSA Pub 1068)